



**American
Alpine Institute**
The Spirit of Alpinism

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American Alpine Institute Rock Climbing Camp Mt. Erie Itinerary

The Rock Climbing Camp is a comprehensive introduction to rock climbing, both for beginners who have never climbed before and for indoor climbers who want to transition into outdoor rock climbing or alpinism.

The course has three primary components:

- Movement skills, including techniques that are hard to learn indoors, such as jamming and friction climbing
- Technical systems, including knots, anchors, belaying, rappelling, and top rope site management
- Judgment skills, including route-finding, recognizing hazards, and risk management

A fourth, less heralded part of the program, are the non-technical camping skills that the team will employ at a front-country campground near the crag.

The Rock Climbing Camp is a six-day program, with four days of climbing instruction embedded within. The first and the sixth day are travel days.

Meeting Place: 1515 12th Street, Bellingham, WA

Pacific Northwest Weather Considerations:

In the summer season, it's generally warm during the day and chilly at night. Nighttime temperatures are often in the 50s. Daytime temperatures are usually in the upper 70s, but occasionally spike up into the 80s or even 90s for short periods of time.

Rain is possible anytime in the Pacific Northwest. The team will continue to learn skills in inclement weather.

Day One

- Travel to Bellingham, Washington. Alaska Airlines and Allegiant Airlines fly directly to Bellingham. Other airlines fly to Seattle. Students may take a shuttle from Seattle to Bellingham (approximately 3 hours – <http://www.airporter.com/>).
- Meet at AAI by 3pm. If students are dropped off at the airport or a bus station, an AAI staff member will meet them and bring them to the 3pm meeting.

- Complete a gear check and pick up any rentals required at the AAI equipment shop. Rentals are included as part of the program's tuition. However, some students may need to make additional purchases. Please see the **equipment list** for details on what is available for rent and for purchase or call the equipment shop at 360-671-1570.
- Pick up groceries and decide of food for the next few days. All food and meals out are included in the course tuition.
- Drive to a local front-country campground, make dinner and spend the night. Students who are new to camping will be given additional instruction on how to set-up for the night. Everybody will be provided with camp cooking instruction.

Day Two:

The team will get up early and travel to Mt. Erie. There, they will engage with the following curriculum:

- Selection, use and care of climbing gear.
- Introduction to basic knots and hitches. Knots to be covered will include but not be limited to the figure-eight follow-through and the clove-hitch.
- Introduction to climbing commands and belay technique.
- Develop an understanding of climbing grades.
- Develop techniques for climbing beginner and intermediate rock climbs.

Once the day is complete, they will return to camp to make dinner and to enjoy a campfire.

Day Three:

On the third day of the program, the team will once again travel from the campground to the crag. From there, they will:

- Review knots from the previous day and then continue the development of their knowledge of knots by learning the figure-eight on-a-bite, the munter-hitch, the overhand, the water-knot, the barrel knot and the autoblock hitch.
- Introduction to climbing guidebooks and route topos.
- Learn how to place and remove both passive and active rock protection.
- Introduction to the concept of SRENE and 12-point anchors.
- Develop the skills to build both pre-equalized and self-equalizing anchors.
- Learn how to set up simple top-ropes using bolts.
- Practice and discuss bouldering technique in an outdoor environment.
- Introduction to basic rappelling technique.
- Continue the development of movement skills for intermediate rock climbs.

Once the day is complete, the team will once again make their way back to camp for dinner and a campfire.

Day Four:

On the fourth day, the team will once again return to Mt. Erie. There they will:

- Review knots from the previous days and then continue the development of their knowledge of knots with the double-bowline, the double-fisherman's knot, the mule-hitch, the kliemhiest, and the prussik-hitch.
- Learn how to use traditional climbing gear to set up a simple top-rope anchor.
- Develop the skills to belay a lead climber.
- Learn how to follow a route that has been lead with traditional gear and clean the equipment off the route as they climb.
- Develop advanced techniques for rappelling.
- Continue the development of movement skills for intermediate rock climbs.

Once the day is complete, they will return to camp for another night of good food and a campfire.

Day Five:

Day five is the final instructional day. The team will make their way to Mt. Erie one last time. There they will:

- Review all of the knots and hitches from the previous days.
- Use traditional climbing gear to set up a complex top-rope anchor.
- Learn how to use a static rope or webbing to set up a multipart top-rope anchor.
- Practice the rappel techniques that have been developed over the preceding days.
- Continue the development of movement skills for intermediate rock climbs.

When the day is complete, the team will go out for a celebrational dinner before returning back to camp for their final night.

Day Six:

On the final day, the team will get up and have breakfast. They will break camp and then make their way back to Bellingham. From there, the students will say good-bye to one another and head home.